

SPENCER & HUBBARD.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 515.]

MARCH 30, 1860.

Mr. HELMICK, from the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads,
made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred the memorial of A. T. Spencer and Gurdon S. Hubbard, of Chicago, Illinois, praying compensation for services performed in carrying the United States mails on their line of steamers between Chicago and the ports on Lake Superior, have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report :

The memorialists represent that at the special request of special agents and postmasters of the Post Office Department, they transported the United States mails in their steamboats between the city of Chicago, in the State of Illinois, and the several ports on Lake Superior, from the year 1854 until 1859, during the season of navigation, for which they have not been compensated, and they now pray that Congress will allow them an equitable remuneration for the said service.

They further represent that this service was performed at the special instance and request of the agents of the Post Office Department, with the distinct understanding that an allowance should be made to them equal to that awarded by the government for service of a similar character, and that they should be adequately compensated therefor.

The evidence before the committee of the efficient character of the service rendered by the memorialists is clear and satisfactory ; and it is also clear that it was undertaken and performed at the request of the acknowledged agents of the Post Office Department who had charge of the same.

The proof of the performance of the service is very strongly substantiated, as will appear from the testimony of Captains J. E. Turner, John Wilson, and B. G. Sloat, which is confirmed by the affidavits of the postmasters at Chicago, Milwaukie, Mackinac, Eagle River, Marquette, Ontonagon, and La Pointe. This evidence, coming from men of character and experience, entirely conversant with all the facts connected with the transportation of the mails on the route, is such as the committee are disposed to place the fullest reliance in, as

substantiating the facts alleged by the memorialists, and, indeed, is abundantly strong on the subject.

The claim of the memorialists is more fully substantiated by the certificate of Charles T. Harvey, who says "that in the year 1856, by the request of Postmaster General Campbell, I accepted the appointment of special post office agent, to report to the department a plan for the better carriage of the Lake Superior mails. I arranged with Messrs. A. T. Spencer & Co., owners of steamer 'Lady Elgin,' to carry the mail on that boat, and sent on the proposal for the contract," &c. The testimony shows that the "Lady Elgin" has continued to carry the mails from that time to 1859, and that for the two years previous it was carried by other boats owned by the claimants.

The evidence being somewhat voluminous, the committee will not burden the House with its publication.

The witnesses generally concur in the statement set forth in the petition, that the service was performed by the memorialists at times under circumstances of great hazard to life and property; and it is the unanimous opinion of the committee that they should receive compensation proportionate to the service rendered and the danger incurred.

The committee are satisfied that the steamers belonging to the line owned by the memorialists offered the most expeditious and reliable means for the transportation of the mails between the city of Chicago and the several ports on Lake Superior, and, moreover, that it was through their agency that the inhabitants of a remotely located country were furnished with their semi-monthly mails from that point during the season of navigation, since the year 1854, a distance between the two extreme points of about 1,200 miles.

From all the evidence in the case, and from the statements of reliable persons having a personal knowledge of the facts, the committee are confident that the service for which compensation is sought was actually and faithfully performed; that the interest of a large and active business community engaged in the development of an important source of national wealth required the performance of the service rendered by the memorialists, and for which they have received no compensation. The committee, therefore, think that the petitioners are entitled to relief, and report a bill for that purpose, and recommend that it do pass.